

"Another Year, Another Candle!"

Text: Job 32:8, 19, 20,

"But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. Behold, my heart is like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins, it is ready to burst. I must speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer."

In the second chapter of Acts we read the magnificent story of Pentecost.

(vss 1-4,) They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance. Here we see the for the first time, the public display of men who were literally on fire for God. They were visited by the Holy Spirit, and it came to them we are told as tongues of fire resting on each one of them, and they began to preach as they had never preached before.

(vss 5-12), All of the people assembled were able to hear these preachers in their own language for the first time. Here were uneducated men mostly who could now speak foreign languages. Naturally this caused a great stir among the ~~xxx~~ crowd and they began to question, "What does this mean?" They couldn't understand it, and probably if the Apostles had been asked to explain it, they could not have done so either. There is and was ~~xxx~~ no easy answer to the miracle that God was performing.

(vss 13), As usual someone had to add the sour grapes to this happy and wonderful occasion. The human thing to do is to find a logical explanation and then explain away something that defies description.

For those of you who have access to the June 4th issue of Newsweek magazine, you will find in there on page 73 an article about Jesus Christ, showing him to be merely an excellent magician. It does away with the raising of Lazarus from the dead. It implies that Jesus used some sort of secret, and possibly sexual baptismal ceremony for initiation into the Kingdom of God, for a few select disciples. The disciples did not see him risen from the dead, but merely had such an emotional dependence upon him, they had hallucinations that he was alive.

Here we have a good example of the current trend in religion, and unfortunately in many churches. Many seminaries, ^{COLLEGES & EVEN CHURCHES} are trying desperately to explain away the Virgin birth of Jesus, His miracles, and anything that cannot be properly explained. One easy way to explain something unusual that happens is to say that the person who relates it is drunk. After all when a person is drunk, he cannot be held accountable for his actions.

(Illustration of Dr. Halford Luccock and D.D.)

Isn't this the case today? Following the Baccalaureate service at West Perry last Sunday evening, as I was taking off my robe, and preparing to leave the school, Mrs. Smith the music teacher and director of the chorus came up to me and said; "I just wanted to say Amen, all through your sermon, and I ^{FINALLY} did at the very end when you finished." I told her, "I wish you would have said it several times," and I meant it.

The Spirit of God at work is something that is alive and vital. It is animated and moving. It cannot be contained and shut up in a vacuum. Look at the prophets of Israel: Elijah stripped down to his loin cloth, running ahead of the chariot of King Ahab; ~~Hosea~~ Hosea, marrying a prostitute to show the people God's mercy toward them. Isaiah walking for 3 days stark naked through the streets of Jerusalem to show the people how God would strip the city in the days ahead. Christ accused of stirring up the people.

Always we see action and movement involved. When people were confronted by Christ or the preaching of the Gospel, they cried out, they wept aloud. They shouted for joy. They sang praises from the very depths of their beings. They lifted their voices in loud praise and in singing. They ran. They leaped. They danced. They fell on their faces in the dust. In other words they showed their emotions. ^{THEY WERE ENTHUSIASTIC.}
(Illustration of man and his dog act, "dogs not playing dead anymore)

Isn't he perhaps right. At the different concerts at the schools recently I looked around at the people when a number was finished and mostly all I saw was a little bit of polite applause, and no enthusiasm.

(Illustration of tombstone in New England, "No enthusiasm")

Is this what has happened to Christianity? Where is the enthusiasm? Where is the "God within" spirit? Did this disappear with the early church?

(Illustration of slave woman and getting religion)

No one is really supposed to get religion as they did at Pentecost. If we see it happen to someone today, we say that he ~~is~~ cannot possibly be sincere. The early Christians were called drunk. One minister tells of a woman in his congregation who stays away from church because the pastor in the pulpit gets too excited about things. He said she likes to go to church to be soothed and rested and comforted and told lovely little stories that do not cause her to squirm or to take fresh stock of her Christianity weekly.

But this woman is not alone in her convictions. We tend to pull away from fervor. We tend to be suspicious about anyone who has enthusiasm in his faith. Enthusiasm in Christianity has a strange way of disturbing the status quo all along the line. Let a man be on fire with his faith and strange things are bound to happen. Martin Luther knew the wonder of this being on fire for the Lord. He once said, "I say one thing boldly and freely that nobody is nearer God than those who hate and deny Him, and He has no more dear children than these." What he meant was that unless Christ matters most to you, He doesn't matter at all.

Faith is not just one more interest in life, side by side with other involvements. Its not just another civic club, or

fraternal organization. It is not just a "pleasant hobby for older people," as one woman put it recently. There is something about this Christian faith that demands everything.

This is what Elihu was saying to Job when he said, "But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that makes him understand. Behold, my heart is like wine that has ~~no~~ no vent; like new wineskins, it is ready to burst. I must speak, that I may find relief; I must open my lips and answer."

True Christian faith touches everything about us and around us if we have it. It transforms everything. Someone once said to me that emotion has its place, and its place is not in a worship service. But I don't think we can truly worship if we omit being emotional. We certainly would not go to see our favorite baseball team and not get very much involved in the game. Nor would we go to any sporting event and not cheer our favorite on. But how many times do we not get involved in the worship of God on a Sunday morning?

ENTHUSIASM AT HERCEANUM. DR. HYTER & JALLS OF FEB 8 CROSS ENTHUSIASTICALLY.
Elihu was telling Job, "I'm so full of this spirit of God,

I can no longer contain it. I must speak or I will burst." The Apostles were so full they had to let go, and they were accused of being drunk.

As we look again at another birthday of the church, may it not merely be another listless occasion, much like we may celebrate our birthdays, when we no longer want to be reminded that life is getting on. But may the birthday of the church be instead, like a birthday to a young child. Something to look forward to, with a cake and candles to blow out and a real celebration for what God has done in the past. May we perhaps echo the words of Elihu, "My heart is like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins, it is ready to burst. We must speak that we may have relief; we must open our lips and answer." We must share the enthusiasm we have for the Christian faith with others, as well as sharing it each time we worship.